Pagan, Jewish and Christian Philanthropy in Antiquity

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III. Pagan, Jewish and Christian Philanthropy in Antiquity: A Pseudo-Clementine Keyword in Context

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'Philanthropy' is an important virtue in Pseudo-Clementine literature.[1] The term 'philanthropy' (φιλανθρωπία) occurs frequently and even plays a pivotal role in Pseudo-Clement's thoughts about charity and the essence of God, and in his views on philosophy and the individual's pathway to immortality. Philanthropy seems to have four distinctive characteristics, which I shall address in four separate sections. (1) First, philanthropy is of a non-elitist, charitable nature. (2) Secondly, the way in which it is defined in the Pseudo-Clementine writings reflects the anti-Gnostic outlook of the discussion. (3) Thirdly, the character of philanthropy is viewed as anti-sophistic, as it is taken as an example of the superiority of prophecy over against sophistic philosophy. (4) Fourthly and finally, philanthropy is considered a pivotal virtue in the process of becoming immortal and god-like—a concern which already dominated the beginning of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* and which could perhaps be considered a kind of autobiographical feature of the persona of 'Clement'. In this paper, I shall deal successively with these aspects of philanthropy in the Pseudo-Clementine literature, especially in the *Homilies*, and situate this concept in its contemporary Graeco-Roman context.

[1] I wish to thank the editor, Jan Bremmer, for his comments and suggestions. I am grateful also to all the participants in the conference, and to Prof. Rob van Houwelingen (Kampen) for his useful comments. Dr Maria Sherwood-Smith was so kind as to correct the English.

1. *The non-elitist, charitable nature of philanthropy*

1.1 *Charitable deeds*

First of all, the non-elitist, charitable nature of philanthropy as depicted in the Pseudo-Clementine literature is striking. It is evident from many passages that philanthropy is universal and egalitarian, and consists of charitable deeds. In the *Epistle of Clement to James*, for instance, philanthropy is called the greatest good, and the author explains this virtue by the following exhortations:

> Wherefore love all your brethren with grave and compassionate eyes, performing to *orphans* the part of parents, to *widows* that of husbands, affording them sustenance with all kindliness, arranging marriages for those who are in their prime, and for *those who are without a profession*, the means of necessary support through employment; giving work to the artificer, and alms to *the incapable* (chap. 8).[2]

These exhortations clearly show that philanthropy extends to all—one's fellows, widows, those without a profession, and those who cannot work—and consists of helping them in accordance with their separate needs. Although there are instances of such philanthropy in the contemporary Graeco-Roman world, the explicit and unrestricted charitable nature of philanthropy in Pseudo-Clement seems to have a distinctive Christian ring to it. The following examples of pagan charitable philanthropy will show that though there are similarities, pagan philanthropy nevertheless differs in remaining elitist and restricted.

According to Dio Chrysostom, in his *Second Discourse on Kingship*, the brave and *philanthropic* king is kindly towards his subjects, forces the unrighteous to mend their ways, and lends a

[2] Translations of the Pseudo-Clementine literature are taken, with small modifications, from A. Roberts *et al.* (eds), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, vol. 8 (Peabody, MA, 1994; reprint of the edn Buffalo, 1886). Translations of Classical literature are taken, again with small modifications, from the Loeb Classical Library. Translations of Plato are taken from E. Hamilton and H. Cairns (eds), *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (Princeton, 1961).

helping hand to the weak (2.77). This shows that Dio Chrysostom considers philanthropy to have charitable consequences. Similarly, Plutarch, in his *Table-talk*, mentions the view that it is impious to destroy food when we have ourselves eaten enough and calls it a lesson in *philanthropy* (7.4, 703B).

Yet, the emphasis which the Jewish philosopher Philo places on philanthropy to the poor is seldom encountered in Graeco-Roman sources. According to Philo, the reason for Jewish law laying down a rule for the cancellation of debts in every seventh year is both to provide succour to the poor and to challenge the rich to show philanthropy (*The Special Laws* 2.71). He also mentions particular commandments promoting philanthropy, such as the ruling that the wages of the poor man must be paid on the same day (*On the Virtues* 88). This stands in sharp contrast with another understanding of 'philanthropy', mentioned by Plutarch. He relates that Artaxerxes, the king of the Persians, used to think that as well as giving *large* gifts, it was no less the mark of a *philanthropic* king *to accept small gifts* graciously and with ready good-will (*Sayings of Kings and Commanders* 172B). Philanthropy can be construed as the virtue of *accepting* less significant gifts.

Philo stresses that the Jewish law is infused with philanthropy in a charitable sense (*The Special Laws* 2.104; 2.110; 3.151-152), and even though his writings are meant as an apology for Judaism, it seems true that, compared with Jewish philanthropy,[3] Graeco-Roman philanthropy retained a very elitist character. The special nature of Jewish and Christian philanthropy is confirmed, from an outsider's perspective, by the Emperor Julian. Contrasting pagan Hellenic religion with that of Judaism and Christianity, Julian emphasizes that

[3] On Jewish philanthropy, see the two monographs by K. Berthelot, *Philanthrôpia judaica: le débat autour de la "misanthropie" des lois juives dans l'Antiquité* (Leiden, 2003); and *L'"humanité de l'autre home" dans la pensée juive ancienne* (Leiden, 2004). On 'philanthropy' in Philo, see also M. Van Veldhuizen, 'Moses: A Model of Hellenistic Philanthropia', *Reformed Review* 38 (1985) 215-24; and P. Borgen, '*Philantropia* in Philo's Writings: Some Observations', in L.B. Elder *et al.* (eds), *Biblical and Humane: A Festschrift for John F. Priest* (Atlanta, Georgia, 1996) 173-88.

'it is disgraceful that, when *no Jew ever has to beg*, and the impious Galilaeans support *not only their own poor but ours as well*, all men see that our people lack aid from us' (*Letters* 22: 'To Arsacius, High-priest of Galatia', 430D; cf. 363A-B; cf. also Juvenal 3.296).[4]

1.2 *Elitist understanding of philanthropy*

The elitism of pagan philanthropy shows itself in two ways in particular. Philanthropy is (1) thought of as primarily practised by the king, and it is often (2) restricted in its application to the worthy and the good.

First of all, the issue of philanthropy belongs to reflections on emperors and kings. 'Philanthropic' is an epithet of the emperor. According to Dio Chrysostom, for instance, in his *First Discourse on Kingship*,

> the kindly and philanthropic king is not only beloved but even adored by his

[4] This outsider's perspective is neglected by J. Whittaker, 'Christianity and Morality in the Roman Empire', *VigChris* 33 (1979) 209-25 at 212, reprinted in Whittaker, *Studies in Platonism and Patristic Thought* (London, 1984) chap. 27, who wrongly suggests there is no evidence of such views: 'if it were the case (...) that the notion of "Feindesliebe" marked a turning-point "wo Antike und Christentum sich schieden," then we would expect to find evidence of this in the recognition by Christians and pagans alike of the existence of a specifically Christian morality that distinguished itself neatly from the inherited Hellenistic ethics of the pagan Roman empire'. On pre-Christian philanthropy in Antiquity, see H. Bolkestein, *Wohltätigkeit und Armenpflege im vorchristlichen Altertum: ein Beitrag zum Problem "Moral und Gesellschaft"* (Utrecht, 1939) and A.R. Hands, *Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome* (London, 1968); on the larger issue of euergetism, see P. Veyne, *Le pain et le cirque: sociologie historique d'un pluralisme politique* (Paris, 1976). On Jewish and Christian philanthropy, see also J.N. Bremmer, 'The Social and Religious Capital of the Early Christians', *Hephaistos* 24 (2006) 269-78 at 270: 'In the ancient world the Jews were standing out because of their charity, witness observations by pagan authors like Juvenal, Artemidorus and Julian the Apostate. This was *not* normal practice among the Greeks and Romans' (italics mine).

fellow-men. And because he knows this and is by nature so inclined, he displays a soul benignant and gentle towards all, inasmuch as he regards all as loyal and as his friends (1.20).

To be sure, philanthropy is discussed in relation to kingship because the king is regarded as 'the best of men, since he is most brave and just and philanthropic' (4.24). In that sense, insofar as the king represents men in general, the need to be philanthropic applies to all men, yet the angle from which philanthropy is discussed is elitist. Drawing on Homer's appraisal of kings as 'Zeus-nurtured,' Aelius Aristides stresses the fact that kings 'have displayed the best sort of philanthropy and magnanimity, and in fact have made clear that their nurture was divine' (*Oratio* 27.34-35).

The elitist nature of Graeco-Roman philanthropy is also apparent, secondly, from its restricted application. Aristotle's characterization of philanthropy, for example, is anything but universal:

it belongs to excellence to do good to *the worthy*, to love *the good*; not to be prompt either to chastise or seek vengeance, but to be complaisant, kindly, and forgiving. Its accompaniments are worth, equity, indulgence, good hope, and further all such qualities as love of home, love of friends, love of comrades, love of strangers, philanthropy, love of the noble (*On Virtues and Vices* 8, 1251b30-36).

The atmosphere and context in which philanthropy is brought to the fore is elitist: it is practised with regard to the worthy, the good, and the noble.[5] Plutarch even shows that it is considered a bad thing if the insignificant and meek are called 'philanthropic' (*How to Tell a Flatterer* 56C) and considers this to be a case of illicit flattery. In his *Precepts of Statecraft*, moreover, he criticizes the Athenian populace for unrestricted, categorical philanthropy. As the Athenians

are readier to help *humble persons of no reputation*, so they welcome and especially esteem facetious and amusing speeches; ... they are terrible even to their chief magistrates, then *philanthropic* even to their enemies (799C-D).

Plutarch's understanding of appropriate philanthropy is far removed from the absolute philanthropy towards orphans, widows, those

[5] But cf. Whittaker, 'Christianity and Morality in the Roman Empire', 217.

without profession and the generally incapable encountered in the Pseudo-Clementine writings. The general restricted nature of Graeco-Roman philanthropy is also nicely illustrated in an oration by Dio Chrysostom in which he praises the city of Apameia for being 'superior in fairness and philanthropy' to the rest of mankind, because they bestow 'ungrudgingly both citizenship and legal rights and offices, believing no *man of worth* to be an alien, and at the same time safeguarding justice for all alike' (41.9). Philanthropy as a politico-ethical virtue is applied only to the worthy, whereas justice is applied to all.

Apart from this political understanding of philanthropy, it remains chiefly in the general sphere of etiquette and the hospitality of giving dinner parties, as the following passage from Diogenes Laertius—taken from his description of Plato's philosophy—makes clear.

> Philanthropy is of three kinds. (1) One is by way of salutations, as when certain people address everyone they meet and, stretching out their hand, give them a hearty greeting. (2) Another mode is seen when one is given to assisting everyone in distress (παντὶ τῷ ἀτυχοῦντι). (3) Another mode of philanthropy is that which makes certain people fond of giving dinners. Thus philanthropy is shown either by a courteous address, or by conferring benefits (τὸ δὲ διὰ τοῦ εὐεργετεῖν), or by hospitality and the promotion of social intercourse (3.98).

This definition shows the general meaning of Graeco-Roman philanthropy, in which the mode of truly universal charity has hardly been developed. This is not to say, of course, that specific charitable deeds of particular individuals are not mentioned in the sources. Aristotle, for instance, in his *Constitution of Athens*, mentions the tyrant Pisistratus as an example of a philanthropic-charitable ruler who 'was not only philanthropic and mild and ready to forgive those who offended, but, in addition advanced money to the poorer people' (16). Yet, Aristotle explains that his charity served two objects, 'first that they might not spend their time in the city but might be scattered over all the country, and secondly that (...) they might have neither the wish nor the time to attend to public affairs.' In this sense, even these deeds of charity were neither genuine nor categorical.

Another instance of individual philanthropy might be that of Marcellus during his capture of Epippolae at Syracuse in 212 BC, according to Posidonius in a passage preserved in Plutarch:

the Romans had a reputation with foreign nations of being formidable in war, but of lacking any indication of consideration for others, philanthropy, or social virtues in general. It was Marcellus who was thought to be the first at that time to show Greeks a greater quality of justice in the Roman character (fragm. 257 Loeb edn; cf. 261).

Similar stories of a fair and philanthropic attitude to subjected cities are told of Brutus (Plutarch, *Table-Talk* 6.8, 694C) and Pompey (*Precept of Statecraft* 815F). Philanthropy in warfare, and exercised by one of the elite, however, still seems to be different from an unrestricted and absolute exercise of philanthropy with regard to all people.

The author of the Pseudo-Clementine writings also seems to be aware of the distinctiveness of Christian philanthropy in another sense. He calls the miracles that Simon Magus performs, such as making statues walk, rolling on burning coals, becoming a dragon, being changed into a goat, and flying in the air, 'useless' miracles, as opposed to the philanthropic miracles of compassionate truth which are performed by Jesus and Peter (*H* 2.34). This distinction between useless and philanthropic miracles is also implicit in the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, as Jan Bremmer has highlighted in his article on Magic in the *Apocryphal Acts*. In this writing, as Bremmer concludes, 'Christian miracles are performed for the improvement of life and soul.'[6] In the Pseudo-Clementine writings, miracles perform the same function, and are therefore called 'philanthropic'.

Although the understanding of philanthropy as non-elitist and charitable seems to be characteristically Christian, there are traces of such an understanding in Graeco-Roman sources, a few of which have already been mentioned. Other pagan texts come still closer to the charitable understanding of philanthropy. According to the *Deipnosophistae* of Athenaeus, for instance, at the festival of the Peloria (a kind of Saturnalia) the Thessalians

set up gaily furnished tables and carry out the festivities so philanthropically, that all foreigners, even, are welcomed to the feast, prisoners are set free, and

[6] J.N. Bremmer, 'Magic in the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*,' in J.N. Bremmer and J.R. Veenstra (eds), *The Metamorphosis of Magic from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period* (Louvain, 2002) 51-70 at 70.

slaves, reclining on couches with the utmost liberty, are entertained while their masters wait on them (14.639D-640A).

This philanthropic attitude is in some respects quite similar to exhortations in the *Epistle of Clement to James* that his readers should visit those who are in prison, and receive strangers into their houses (chap. 9). Yet whereas the philanthropy exercised during the Thessalian Peloria remains incidental (and is a deliberate *temporary inversion* of *normal* practice),[7] the Pseudo-Clementine exhortations to practise philanthropy seem more general and absolute. Finally, there are some Graeco-Roman philosophical traditions that are indeed similarly absolute and unrestricted in their understanding of philanthropy. A very striking instance is found in Dio Chrysostom's *Seventh, or Euboean, Discourse*. In this discourse, Dio exhibits a severe criticism of the restricted nature of most contemporary pagan philanthropy. According to Dio, his contemporaries are quite similar to the swineherd who bids Odysseus

> to send him [Odysseus] to the city as soon as possible that he may beg for alms there, and not to feed him at the steading any longer. The swineherd feels no surprise at the treatment and its misanthropy (ἀπανθρωπία), as though it were the regular procedure to deal with needy strangers thus strictly and meanly and to welcome open-heartedly with gifts and presents only the rich, from whom, of course, the host expected a like return, very much as the present custom is in selecting the recipients of our philanthropy and preferment; for what seem to be acts of kindliness and favours turn out, when examined rightly, to be nothing more or less than accommodations and loans (7.88-89).

This pagan criticism of contemporary philanthropy is noteworthy, as it acknowledges the restricted and non-charitable way in which this virtue was practised. Dio's analysis that philanthropy is, wrongly, not unconditional but is in fact based on the expectation of a like return is very similar to Pseudo-Clement's thoughts on this issue, as we shall see now.

[7] For such festivals see H.S. Versnel, *Transition and Reversal in Myth and Ritual* (Leiden, 1993) 136-227 ('Saturnus and the Saturnalia') at 150-63 on the reversed order during the Saturnalia; J.N. Bremmer, *Greek Religion and Culture, the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Leiden, 2008) 83.

1.3 *Pseudo-Clement's definition of philanthropy*

For reasons very similar to Dio Chrysostom, in his *Homilies* Pseudo-Clement distinguishes philanthropy from another virtue like friendship (φιλία). According to Pseudo-Clement, philanthropy is 'affection towards anyone whatsoever in respect of his being a fellow man, *apart from physical persuasion* (ἄνευ τοῦ φυσικῶς πείθοντος ἡ πρὸς οἱονδήποτε στοργὴ καθὸ ἄνθρωπός: *H* 12.25). Philanthropy, in this view, has nothing to do with physical-genetic relationships. Nor is it identical with friendship, as friendship springs from reciprocity: it presupposes that favours can be returned. Like Dio Chrysostom, Pseudo-Clement is of the opinion that philanthropy is not based on requital, but should, on the contrary, be unconditional and unrestricted.

With this understanding of philanthropy, Pseudo-Clement goes against much contemporary thinking. Plutarch, for instance, in his *Letter to Apollonius*, praises Apollonius' deceased son for being 'fond of his father (φιλοπάτωρ), mother (φιλομήτωρ), relatives (φιλοίκειος) and friends (φιλόφιλος), or, in a word, a lover of his fellow men (φιλάνθρωπος)' (120A-B). It is exactly this kind of physical-genetic and restricted philanthropy which Pseudo-Clement subjects to criticism.

One could also say that his criticism is addressed against an Aristotelian definition of philanthropy construed as a kind of friendship. In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle says about friendship:

> Parent seems by nature to feel it [friendship] for offspring and offspring for parent, not only among men but among birds and among most animals; it is felt mutually by members of the same race, and especially by men, whence we praise lovers of their fellow men (φιλάνθρωποι). We may see even in our travels how near and dear every man is to every other (book 8, 1155a16-21).

Differently from Aristotle, Pseudo-Clement emphasizes that philanthropy is not necessarily felt mutually, since it is unconditional, and that it should not be mistaken for parental love and friendship, as it is not a physical-genetic persuasion. Just as a mother who loves her own child may not be a lover of children in general (φιλότεκνος), a compassionate man who does good to a particular stranger is not necessarily philanthropic, a lover of man in general (*H* 12.26).

Pseudo-Clement, thus, states not only that philanthropy is different from friendship, but also that it is not similar to being a stranger-receiver (ξενοδόχος). As we have already seen, in Graeco-Roman culture philanthropy was often closely associated with hospitality: φιλανθρωπία was often nothing other than φιλοξενία, hospitality. According to an opinion recorded in Plutarch, to add one more example, the table to which guests are invited is

> an altar of the gods of friendship and hospitality. (...) when the table is done away with, there go with it all these other things: the altar fire on the hearth, the hearth itself, wine-bowls, all entertainment and *hospitality*: the most *philanthropic* and the first acts of communion between man and man (*Dinner of the Seven Wise Men* 158C).

In this view, hospitality and philanthropy are closely related. Pseudo-Clement's definition of philanthropy, however, as differing from both friendship and hospitality, is highly critical of such Greek views.

Although Pseudo-Clement understands philanthropy as an unrestrictedly charitable virtue, distinct from virtues like friendship and hospitality, at the same time he thinks that philanthropy should be accompanied by other virtues such as σωφροσύνη (soundness of mind, prudence, moderation in sensual desires, self-control), (b) δικαιοσύνη (justice), and (c) ἐλεημοσύνη (pity, mercy). According to Pseudo-Clement, one can escape everlasting punishment if one chooses to worship one God, abstain from the table of the demons, and undertake σωφροσύνη with φιλανθρωπία and δικαιοσύνη (*H* 9.23). Σωφροσύνη is important here, because, 'if anyone be σώφρων, he is able also to be philanthropic' (*H* 8.3-4). God himself shows that patience, mercy and philanthropy are combined virtues, as he is patient to all who are in impiety, as a merciful and philanthropic father, knowing that impious men become pious (*H* 11.7).

It is striking that despite their different views on the nature of philanthropy, Graeco-Roman authors would agree with Pseudo-Clement that the afore-mentioned virtues are closely related. (a) *Moderation* and philanthropy go together, according to authors such as Posidonius (fragm. 261 edn Edelstein & Kidd) and Plutarch (*Bravery of Women* 260F; *Precepts of Statecraft* 823A). (b) *Justice* and philanthropy presuppose one another, according to Chrysippus and Plutarch. The latter lashes out against those philosophers who set up pleasure (ἡδονη) as a purpose, since in this way they annul

justice. Although, in Plutarch's view, the Stoics are wrong in calling pleasure a good, they at least preserve justice and leave room for goodness and philanthropy, whereas the doctrine of the other philosophers who perceive pleasure as a purpose sounds a death-knell for society (*Stoic Self-Contradictions* 1038D-E). According to Dio Chrysostom, too, justice, prudence, temperance and philanthropy occur together, and can inspire a man to honour the gods and have consideration for others (*Discourses* 1.6). (c) As regards the relation between *mercy* and philanthropy, Plato in his *Laws*, reports the opinion that in the age of Cronus, 'the god, in his philanthropy, (...) set over us this superior race of spirits who took charge of us, (...) providing us with peace and mercy, sound law and unstinted justice' (book 4, 713D-E). And indeed, Alcinous stresses the fact that, whereas 'anger (...) is necessary for repelling and taking vengeance on enemies, mercy is properly linked to philanthropy' (32.4, 186.15-24). Despite varying views on philanthropy, Graeco-Roman authors and Pseudo-Clement agree on the intertwining of philanthropy with virtues like moderation, justice, and mercy.

Yet there is again an important difference, inasmuch as Pseudo-Clement thinks that philanthropy extends even to one's enemies (*H* 12.32-33; cf. 12.25-26). This was not the common view among Graeco-Roman authors, for whom the virtue of philanthropy was not unrestricted and absolute, as we have seen. Philo, however, believes that 'the wise man is by nature philanthropic and forgiving and does not bear a grudge to anyone at all but in overcoming his enemies thinks it right to do them good rather than harm' (*Questions and Answers in Genesin* 4.194). In general, Graeco-Roman authors would not subscribe to this view. There was a custom that enemies who had died in battle should be granted a burial, which Dio Chrysostom interprets as *an act of philanthropy* (*Discourses* 76.5; cf. Philo, *Flaccus* 61), but a generous attitude to one's enemies in general seems to have been restricted to a few Cynic and Stoic philosophers. Plutarch, in his treatise *How to Profit by One's Enemies*, has a passage on Diogenes the Cynic and his views on philanthropy with regard to one's enemies:

> Take the declaration of Diogenes, which is thoroughly philosophic and statesmanlike: 'How shall I defend myself against my enemies?' 'By proving yourself good and honourable.' What would be their state of mind if you were to show yourself to be an honest, sensible man and a useful citizen, of high

repute in speech, clean in actions, orderly in living? (...) They realize that they are outdone by their enemies in diligence, goodness, magnanimity, philanthropy and well-doing. If you wish to distress the man who hates you, be a man yourself, show moderation, and treat with philanthropy and justice those who have to deal with you (88B-C).

Similar reports on Diogenes appear in Epictetus, who exhorts his readers in the following way:

It is not becoming for us to be unhappy on any person's account, but to be happy because of all, and above all others because of God. (...) Come, was there anybody that Diogenes did not love, a man who was so gentle and philanthropic that he gladly took upon himself all those troubles and physical hardships for the sake of the common weal? But what was the manner of his loving? As became a servant of Zeus, caring for men indeed, but at the same time subject unto God (book 3, 24.63-66).

Epictetus goes on to tell us that Diogenes even extended this unrestricted, categorical love of all men to the pirates who captured him, but with whom he became on good terms and whom he tried to reform. Such unrestricted Cynic philanthropy did not go unnoticed. It was emulated by Stoic philosophers like Epictetus, who encourages his readers as follows: 'If you fall in with a crowd, call it games, a festival, a holiday, try to keep holiday with the people. For what is pleasanter to a man who is philanthropic than the sight of large numbers of them?' (4.4.27; cf. 4.8.32). Yet, the Cynics' philanthropy also attracted considerable criticism.

According to Aelius Aristides, for instance, the Cynics

give the name of sharing to fraud, the name of philosophy to envy, the scorn of money to want. And although they profess philanthropy, they have never helped anyone, but they mock those who employ them. (...) These are the men who believe (...) that to take is to be philanthropic (*Oratio* 3.666-68).

Against this background, it becomes clear that Pseudo-Clement's view that philanthropy extends to one's enemies (in his case undoubtedly inspired by Jesus' command to love one's enemies – *Matthew* 5.44 = *Luke* 6.27) was far from generally accepted in Graeco-Roman society.

2. *The anti-Gnostic outlook of the philanthropy discussion*

The concept of philanthropy in the Pseudo-Clementine writings is not

only of a charitable nature, its discussion also acquires strong anti-Gnostic features. Although this polemic is addressed against Christian Gnostics, at the same time this anti-Gnostic discussion picks up several themes that are current in the general Graeco-Roman debate about the question of whether or not God himself is philanthropic and benevolent. Both among Graeco-Roman philosophers and Christians the notion of philanthropy is discussed with regard to the concept of God.

In his *Homilies*, Pseudo-Clement addresses the Gnostic assertion that the highest God is without affection for this world, and asks rhetorically: 'If God is without affection (ἄστοργος), who is philanthropic?' (2.44). The juxtaposition of philanthropy and its opposite, lack of affection (ἀστοργία), also occurs among the Greeks. Athenaeus, in his *Deipnosophistae*, talks of the Milesians' lack of philanthropy and lack of affection:

> Because of their excellent physical condition they [the Milesians] bear themselves haughtily, they are full of irate spirit, hard to placate, fond of contention, never condescending to philanthropy nor cheerfulness, displaying a lack of affection (ἀστοργία) in their character (14.625B).

Pseudo-Clement now uses this contrast between philanthropy and lack of affection in his discussion of Gnostic views on the nature of God. The Gnostics' opinion that the highest God is without affection results in their view that the God portrayed in the Jewish Scriptures cannot be the highest God. Pseudo-Clement seems to recognize the possibly problematic portrayal of God in the Jewish Scriptures, as he himself acknowledges that these Scriptures indeed 'misrepresent God in many respects' (*H* 2.44-45). In this, Pseudo-Clement resembles Philo, who was also aware of inaccurate descriptions of God in the Jewish Scriptures. According to Philo, 'All such forms of words (in Scripture) are generally used in the Law rather for learning and as a teaching aid than for the nature of truth' (*Questions and Answers in Genesin* 2.54).

The question itself of how God and his philanthropy are to be thought of is also known to Greek philosophy. Plutarch discusses Plato's opinion that the personified figure of Hades 'is philanthropic and wise and rich, and controls the souls of the dead by persuasion and reason' (Plutarch is probably referring here to Plato, *Cratylus* 403A-404B) and contrasts this view with the practice of those who

cause human beings to be buried alive as an offering to propitiate Hades (Plutarch, *Superstition* 171D-E). Similarly, Plutarch is puzzled by the fact that Plato gives 'a home on the eternal divine revolutions not to the Muses but to the Sirens, divinities who are by no means philanthropic or good' (*Table-Talk* 9.14, 745C).

Pseudo-Clement, in his discussion of Gnosticism, is concerned with the same question of how God and his attributes are to be thought of, and in this context also addresses God's relation to philanthropy. He warns his readers to 'beware of thinking otherwise of God, than that he is the only God, and Lord, and Father, good (ἀγαθός), righteous (δίκαιος), the creator, (...) *ordaining philanthropy*' (φιλανθρωπίαν νομιτεύων: *H* 2.44-45). Although Pseudo-Clement is involved here in polemics against Christian Gnostics, nevertheless the issues at stake are not divorced from general debates in Graeco-Roman philosophy. Plutarch, for instance, criticizes those philosophers who deny that there is a god whose care it is that man grow straight in the direction of virtue, and regards it as shocking and ungrateful of them, 'to say such things, especially as they continue to profit by God's philanthropy' (*The Dialogue of Love* 758A).

The issue of whether God is philanthropic and beneficent seems to have been heavily discussed in the triangular debates between Platonists (such as Plutarch), Stoics, and Epicureans. According to Plutarch, the Stoic philosopher Chrysippus is right to fight 'especially against Epicurus and against those who do away with providence,' and regards Stoics and Platonists like himself as drawing on the same conception of the gods 'in thinking of them as beneficent and philanthropic'. It is noteworthy that Plutarch says that the Epicureans, who deny this conception, are in this respect similar to Jews, Syrians and the poets, who all—according to Plutarch—deny that the gods are well-disposed.[8] Like Chrysippus, Plutarch criticizes Epicurus for believing that the gods are not provident (προνοητικοί) and

[8] Plutarch is apparently convinced that the Jewish concept of God is not entirely positive, perhaps because there is talk in the Old Testament of God being 'a jealous God' (*Exodus* 20.5), or because of the Jews' strict observance of the Sabbath even if attacked by the enemy (*Superstition* 169C).

philanthropic (φιλάνθρωποι; *Stoic Self-Contradictions* 1051D-1052B). The same discussion seems to feature in the Pseudo-Clementine writings, and it is striking that Pseudo-Clement repeatedly states that Simon Magus, the Gnostic against whom he addresses his criticism, is accompanied by Athenodorus the Epicurean (*H* 4.6.3, 16.1.2). It seems that the anti-Gnostic discussion in the Pseudo-Clementine writings is an extension of the discussion about the nature of God already being conducted in ancient philosophy.

In this philosophical discussion, Plutarch sides with the Stoics, because they say 'that God is preconceived and conceived to be not only immortal and blessed but also philanthropic' (*On Common Conceptions* 1075E-F), even though Plutarch thinks that the Stoics' views are not consistent and in certain respects as absurd as those of the Epicureans (*Stoic Self-Contradictions* 1051D-1052B). Plutarch criticizes Chrysippus, for instance, because *the deeds* which Chrysippus imputes to God are sometimes harsh, barbarous, and 'Galatian', although his epithets for God are always fair and philanthropic (*Stoic Self-Contradictions* 1049A-B). Plutarch is an ardent proponent of the idea of God's philanthropy and strongly emphasizes that it is God's nature to bestow favour and give assistance, and that it is not his nature to be angry and do harm (*A Pleasant Life Impossible* 1102A).

This conviction is also found in other philosophers, such as Dio Chrysostom. Dio criticizes the common attitude of mankind towards the gods in difficult times:

> Whenever there comes a pestilence or an earthquake, we blame the gods, in the belief that they cause misery for mankind, and we claim they are not righteous or philanthropic (καὶ οὔ φαμεν αὐτοὺς εἶναι δικαίους οὐδὲ φιλανθρώπους), not even if they are punishing us justly for most grievous sins. (...) Yet war, which is no less destructive than an earthquake, we choose of our own volition; and we do not blame at all the human beings who are responsible for these evils, as we blame the gods for earthquake or pestilence (*Discourses* 38.20).

Despite such difficulties, Aelius Aristides confesses God's philanthropy: 'Still we survived even in these circumstances, clinging to our raft like a kind of Odysseus, since we did not sail alone, but under the protection of the greatest and most philanthropic helmsman, who has ever kept our boats from sinking' (*Oratio* 33.18).

Much of the Graeco-Roman debate on the righteousness and

philanthropy of God seems to be continued in the anti-Gnostic debate in the Pseudo-Clementine writings. The same issue is discussed by other early Christians, such as Clement of Alexandria who, in an anti-Marcionite chapter of his *Paedagogus*, reminds his readers of

> the supreme proof God has given of his *love of man*, in that *he has become man*. (...) Out of the excess of his *love of man*, he has himself experienced the sufferings which are common to every *man* by his nature: τὸ μέγιστον αὐτοῦ τῆς φιλανθρωπίας, ὅτι διὰ ἡμᾶς ἄνθρωπος ἐγένετο ... τῇ ἑκάστου τῶν ἀνθρώπων διὰ ὑπερβολὴν φιλανθρωπίας συμπαθήσας φύσει. (*Paedagogus* 1.8).

God becoming man is seen as the most radical form of his love of man. This theme is already attested in Christianity as early as Paul's *Letter to Titus* in which the author says that 'the kindness and philanthropy of God our Saviour dawned upon the world' (3.4).[9]

In a similar sense, the spreading of God's philanthropy is

[9] This Pseudo-Pauline letter, addressed to Titus, might entail an implicit polemical contrast between the revelation of God's *philanthropy* in Christ, of which Titus is reminded in *Crete* (1.5), and views recorded in Diodorus Siculus that (the majority of) the Greek gods had their origin in *Crete* and extended their *philanthropy* to the Cretans (5.46.3: cf. 5.64.2); from there they set out 'to visit many regions of the inhabited world, conferring benefactions upon the races of men' (5.77.4). For the Cretan setting of *Titus*, see also R.M. Kidd, 'Titus as *Apologia*: Grace for Liars, Beasts, and Bellies', *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 21 (1999) 185-209. On 'philanthropy' in *Titus* 3.4, see also C. Spicq, 'La Philanthropie hellénistique, vertu divine et royale (à propos de *Tit.* III,4)', *Studia theologica* 12 (1958) 169-91 (cf. C. Spicq, *Notes de lexicographie néo-testamentaire*, vol. 2 [Fribourg and Göttingen, 1978] 922-7: 'φιλανθρωπία φιλάνθρωπος'); R. Le Déaut, 'Φιλανθρωπία dans la littérature grecque jusqu'au Nouveau Testament (Tite III, 4)', in *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant*, vol. 1 (Vatican City, 1964) 255-94; A. Pelletier, 'Ce n'est pas la sagesse, mais le Dieu sauveur qui aime l'humanité', *Revue Biblique* 87 (1980) 397-403; and P.H.R. van Houwelingen, *Timoteüs en Titus: Pastorale Instructiebrieven* (Kampen, 2009), *ad loc.*

stressed by Philo. Philo is thinking of God's general manifestation within man's soul, not of a specific incarnation. According to Philo, God,

> in his tender mercy and philanthropy, has deigned to visit created being and come down from the boundaries of heaven to the utmost ends of earth, to show his goodness to our race. (...) One worthy house there is—the soul that is fitted to receive Him. Justly and rightly then shall we say that in the invisible soul the invisible God has his earthly dwelling-place (*On the Cherubim* 99-101).

As he says elsewhere, 'When in his mercy and philanthropy God wanted to establish the good among us also, He found no worthier temple on earth than the faculty of reason' (*On the Virtues* 188).

This divine interest in man is equally emphasized in ancient philosophers such as Plutarch and Dio Chrysostom. In Plutarch's view, 'Men are divine and dear to God': God is 'not a bird-lover (φίλορνις), but a lover of man (φιλάνθρωπος)' (*On the Sign of Socrates* 593A; cf. Plato, *Minos* 319A). Dio Chrysostom, in his turn, talks about the philosophical theory which establishes 'a noble and philanthropic fellowship of gods and men', this fellowship not extending to 'all living beings whatsoever, but only to such as have a share in reason and intellect' (*Discourses* 36.38).

It is against the background of Christian ideas on God's philanthropy (as radically proven in God *becoming* man), and in the context of anti-Gnostic and general ancient philosophical debates on the nature, righteousness and philanthropy of God, that Pseudo-Clement expresses his own convictions about God's philanthropy.

3. *The anti-sophistic nature of philanthropy*

According to Pseudo-Clement, philanthropy is also a topic that demonstrates the difference between philosophy and prophecy; the latter supersedes philosophical guess-work, which is merely based on conjecture (*H* 15.5-7).

In stressing the non-philosophical nature of philanthropy, Pseudo-Clement agrees with Philo, but comments from Dio Chrysostom also come close to this view. Like Pseudo-Clement, Philo links philanthropy with prophecy or, as Philo puts it, 'holy oracles'. Concluding his treatment of Moses' virtues, Philo says:

We have stated the proofs of the legislator's philanthropy (φιλανθρωπία) and fellow feeling (κοινωνίαν), a quality which he possessed through a happy gift of natural goodness, and also as the outcome of the lessons which he learnt from *the holy oracles* (*On the Virtues* 80).

Both Philo and Pseudo-Clement derive the virtue of philanthropy from the prophetic, holy oracles. A philosopher such as Plutarch feels the need to stress, however, that philosophic reasoning as such does not necessarily destroy philanthropy:

it is true that philosophic reasoning, through knowledge and acquaintance with the cause in every case, does away with the wonder and amazement that spring from blindness and ignorance, but at the same time *it does not destroy* our serenity, moderation, or *philanthropy* (*On Listening to Lectures* 44B-C).

Yet, he also implicitly assigns philosophy and philanthropy to two different areas inasmuch as they provide different topics of discussion at a symposium:

there are (...) topics of discussion that are particularly suitable for a symposium. Some are supplied by history; others it is possible to take from current events; some contain many lessons bearing on *philosophy*, many on piety; some induce an emulous enthusiasm for courageous and great-hearted deeds, and some for charitable and *philanthropic deeds* (*Table-talk* 1.1, 614A-B).

This illustrates that philosophy and philanthropy are distinguished from one another.

This comes to the fore particularly in Dio Chrysostom, who emphasizes, in one of his discourses on kingship, that the king has no need to be highly skilled in philosophy but only to show his philanthropic nature:

Nor, again, is it necessary that he studies philosophy to the point of perfecting himself in philosophy; he need only live simply and without affectation, to give proof by his very conduct of a character that is *philanthropic*, gentle, just, lofty and brave as well, and, above all, one that takes delight in bestowing benefits—a trait which approaches most nearly to the nature of the gods (*Discourses* 2.26).

These examples show that Greek authors regularly distinguished between philosophy and philanthropy, and considered the latter to be a virtue resembling the divine nature.

However, philanthropy could also be portrayed *as part of*

philosophy. According to Philo, the Jewish School of the Essenes were trained in various virtues, 'taking for their defining standards these three, love of God, love of virtue, and love of man' (ὅροις καὶ κανόσι τριττοῖς χρώμενοι, τῷ τε φιλοθέῳ καὶ φιλαρέτῳ καὶ φιλανθρώπῳ: *Every Good Man is Free* 83-84). In this way, the Essenes are 'athletes of virtue produced by a philosophy free from the pedantry of Greek wordiness' (88). Jewish philosophy, with philanthropy among its defining characteristics, is opposed to a particular type of Greek philosophy, that of verbosity.

This contrast between philosophy and sophistic philology is also drawn by Pseudo-Clement. Although his differentiation between prophetic philanthropy and philosophical conjecture (*H* 15.5-7) seems to suggest that he adopts a very critical attitude towards philosophy, on closer scrutiny the philosophy he attacks seems to be mainly of a sophistic kind.[10] Opinions in the philosophical schools are taken as true or false, Pseudo-Clement argues, *depending on the ability of those who defend them* (*H* 1.3). The simple and non-artificial words of Christian preachers contrast sharply with the show of rhetorical prowess by the philosophers, who make use of a great armoury of syllogisms and prove themselves to be 'merely *lovers of words* (*philologists*), and not truth-loving philosophers': εἰκῇ φιλόλογοί ἐστε καὶ οὐ φιλαλήθεις φιλόσοφοι (*H* 1.9-11). It is the former, 'the Greek philologists, rather than philosophers, going about matters by conjectures' (οἱ τῶν Ἑλλήνων φιλόλογοι (οὐ φιλόσοφοι) διὰ στοχασμῶν τοῖς πράγμασιν ἐπιβάλλοντες) with whom Pseudo-Clement takes issue (*H* 2.8).

It is within this anti-sophistic context that Pseudo-Clement stresses Jesus' identity as 'the true *prophet*'.[11] This prophet

[10] For this differentiation between two kinds of philosophy, cf. also G. Geréby, 'Reasons and Arguments in the Clementina', in F. Amsler *et al.* (eds), *Nouvelles intrigues pseudo-clémentines - Plots in the Pseudo-Clementine Romance* (Lausanne, 2008) 211-22 at 213-16, 221-2.

[11] On this issue, see also G. Filoramo, 'Le prophétisme du roman pseudo-clémentin dans le contexte historico-religieux de l'antiquité tardive', in Amsler, *Nouvelles intrigues pseudo-clémentines*, 351-9; J. Barnes, '[Clément] et la philosophie', and Geréby, 'Reasons and

alone is able to enlighten the souls of men (...). Every [philosophical] doctrine is set up and pulled down, and the same is thought true or false, according to the power of him who advocates it; so that doctrines do not appear as they are, but take the appearance of being or not being truth or falsehood from those who advocate them. On this account the whole business of piety needed *a true prophet*, that he might tell us things that are, as they are (*H* 1.19).

By contrast with specious and artificial discourses, prophecy is so powerful that against it 'neither arts of discourses, nor tricks of sophisms (οὔτε τέχναι λόγων οὔτε σοφισμάτων ἐπίνοιαι) nor syllogisms, nor any other contrivance, can prevail a jot' (*H* 1.20-21). It appears that Pseudo-Clement's assertion that philanthropy 'demonstrates the difference between philosophy and prophecy' (*H* 15.5-7) is addressed first and foremost against sophistic philosophy.

At the same time, some Greek philosophers were also of the opinion that philosophy is secondary to prophetic oracles. Dio Chrysostom distinguishes between the *heavenly* education of philosophy and the mundane training in rhetoric and literature (4.28, 33, 35). It was with regard to the higher, heavenly education, according to Dio,

that men of old called those persons 'sons of Zeus' who received the good education and were manly of soul (...). Whoever, then, being noble by nature, possesses that higher education, readily acquires this other also. And thenceforth nothing can rob him of any of these things, neither time nor any tricky sophist (*Discourses* 4.28, 33, 35).

Moreover, the Greek philosopher Porphyry considers philosophy to derive from Apollo's oracles, as his writing 'Philosophy from Oracles' shows.[12] Similarly, other writings, such as the *Chaldean Oracles* and the Hermetic writings, 'are presented as revelations of divine truth, not as the product of human reason'.[13] Against this

Arguments in the Clementina', *ibidem*, 283-302 at 298-302; 217-20, respectively.

[12] On this topic, see A. Busine, *Paroles d'Apollon: pratiques et traditions oraculaires dans l'Antiquité tardive (IIe-VIe siècles)* (Leiden, 2005), chap. 4.

[13] G. Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Cambridge, 1993^2) 32 with regard to the

background Pseudo-Clement's differentiation between philosophy and prophecy is less antagonistic than one would assume at first sight.

4. *The pivotal role of philanthropy in becoming immortal and god-like*

In the Pseudo-Clementine writings, philanthropy also seems to play an important role in the process of becoming immortal and god-like. The immortality of the soul is an issue that concerns the author of the *Homilies* right from the beginning of his writing. From his earliest youth on, he claims, he made 'frequent cogitations concerning death' and during his studies he contemplated moving to Egypt in order to inquire 'whether the soul is immortal'. It was at that stage, that Clement heard the gospel being preached in Rome: 'being born into the other world, and becoming eternal, you shall enjoy [God's] unspeakable good things' (*H* 1.1-7). In that sense we could perhaps call 'immortality' the author's autobiographical concern. In his *Homilies*, philanthropy seems to be the answer to the existential question of whether one could become immortal.

According to Pseudo-Clement, it is necessary for the man who practises philanthropy to be an imitator of God (*H* 12.25-27); philanthropy is 'the cause of immortality' (*H* 12.32-33). The view that through philanthropy one imitates God and attains to God's nature is also attested in Philo and some Graeco-Roman authors.[14] Philo is of the opinion that

> those doomed to punishment for their intolerable misdeeds should have mediators to make intercession for them, who, *imitating the merciful power of the Father*, will dispense punishment with more moderation and in a more philanthropic spirit. Doing well is the peculiar prerogative of a god (*On the*

Hermetica. For the *Chaldean Oracles*, see R. Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden, 1989). On pagan prophecy, see also Filoramo, 'Le prophétisme du roman pseudo-clémentin', 354-6.

[14] See also Whittaker, 'Christianity and Morality in the Roman Empire', 217-22. On man's assimilation to God, see G.H. van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context: The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity* (Tübingen, 2008), chap. 2.2, 124-81.

Change of Names 129).

In his view, Moses 'has filled practically his whole legislation with injunctions to show pity and philanthropy (...). For in no other action does man so much resemble God as in showing kindness, and what greater good can there be than that they should imitate God?' (*The Special Laws* 4.72-73).

Similarly, according to Plutarch 'with those who emulate God's virtue and make themselves like unto his goodness and philanthropy, God is well pleased and therefore causes them to prosper and gives them a share of his own equity, justice, truth, and gentleness' (*To an Uneducated Ruler* 780F-781A). In the same vein, Dio Chrysostom asks himself how, since God does not neglect his eternal watch over men, a man could ever feel 'oppressed by similar duties. Should he not, so far as in him lies, imitate God's power and philanthropy?' (3.82).

Apart from Pseudo-Clement, this way of thinking is also reflected in the writings of other early Christians such as Clement of Alexandria and Justin Martyr. According to the former, from the divine Logos 'we learn (...) all that goes with love of freedom and philanthropy and love of the good. In a word, through him we become like God by a likeness of virtue' (*Paedagogus* 1.12.94). And as Justin Martyr says, in a passage closely parallel to the one just cited above from Plutarch: 'God approves of only those who imitate his inherent virtues, namely, temperance, justice, philanthropy, and any other virtue proper to God' (*The First Apology* 10.1). The imitation of God's philanthropy is an important concern of Jews, Christians, and Greek philosophers.

Conclusion

To conclude, the notion of philanthropy is central to the Pseudo-Clementine writings. Due to its charitable intention, which is not restricted to particular recipients, it differs significantly from Graeco-Roman thinking on this issue. Nevertheless, it could link up with some strands in ancient philosophy, particularly those represented by Cynic and Stoic thinkers, who developed a categorical, absolute understanding of philanthropy. Whereas this categorical definition of philanthropy is limited to just a few Greek philosophical movements,

it is typical of early Christianity, including the Pseudo-Clementine literature.[15]

At the same time, philanthropy is an important theme in Pseudo-Clement's attack on Gnosticism. His anti-Gnostic debate also reflects the general philosophical debate on the nature of God that goes on between Platonists, Stoics, and Epicureans. Whereas the Platonists and the Stoics regard God as philanthropic, the Epicureans hold that the gods are neither provident nor philanthropic.

Whereas Pseudo-Clement seems to agree with the major philosophies regarding God's philanthropic nature, at first sight he seems to criticize Greek philosophy by also treating philanthropy as a topic that demonstrates *the difference* between philosophy and prophecy. However, the philosophy under discussion appears to be of a sophistic kind, and its criticism is in line with general philosophical condemnations of sophism. Moreover, some Greek philosophers stress the different, practical nature of philanthropy, which can be practised without specialist knowledge of philosophy, whereas others even stress the oracular origins of philosophy.

Finally, the virtue of philanthropy is also important for Pseudo-Clement's autobiographical concern, his quest for immortality. The imitation of God's philanthropy becomes for him the cause of immortality. This objective of imitating God's philanthropy is also expressed by some Greek philosophers. It is through philanthropy that one imitates God and participates in his nature.

[15] On 'philanthropy' in the early Church, see further J.-P. Cattenoz, 'La philanthropie divine dans l'oeuvre de Jean Chrysostome', in A. Dupleix (ed.), *Recherches et tradition: Mélanges patristiques offerts à Henri Crouzel* (Paris, 1992) 61-76; C. Osborne, 'Neoplatonism and the love of God in Origen', in R.J. Daly (ed.), *Origeniana Quinta* (Leuven, 1992) 270-83; and B.E. Daley, 'Building a New City: The Cappadocian Fathers and the Rhetoric of Philanthropy', *JECS* 7 (1999) 431-61.

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